

175

LAMENTATION
ON
THE DEATH
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

ISAAC S. DEMUND.



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OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

President of the United States.

BY

ISAAC S. DEMUND,

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, PARAMUS, NEW-JERSEY.

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THE CONSISTORY OF THE CHURCH AT PARAMUS:

REV. MR. DEMUND: DEAR SIR: We participate in the general sense of the loss sustained by our whole country in the death of President Lincoln, and cherish the highest regard for his virtues as a ruler and as a man.

It would be very grateful to our own feelings to give permanent shape to any tribute to the memory of our deceased President, and to the lessons of Providence.

With the further view to meet a very general desire on the part of the congregation to have copies of your sermon upon the event, we unite in the request that you would furnish us with the manuscript for publication.

Yours fraternally,

PETER A. ZABRISKIE,
JOHN I. VAN SAUN,
ABRAHAM D. ACKERMAN,
ALBERT A. ACKERMAN,
THOMAS V. B. ZABRISKIE,
HENRY CLAIR,
JACOB Y. TOURSE,
JACOB HOPPER.

THE CHURCH AT PARAMUS, May, 1865.

TO THE CONSISTORY, ELDERS, AND DEACONS OF THE CHURCH AT PARAMUS, N. J.:

DEAR BRETHREN: You have been pleased to request that the discourse lately preached by me on the death of President Lincoln, should be furnished you for publication, to meet the desire of yourselves and the congregation you represent.

In manuscript form it is herewith committed to your hands, and to you and the congregation it is affectionately dedicated, in the prayerful hope we may all be enabled to profit as we should by the calamitous providence, value more than ever before the lofty principles and rich blessings of civil and religious liberty, and realize more deeply that nothing short of the coöperating grace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, can sanctify them to us, and impart to our nation true greatness, strength, and prosperity.

Your pastor and fellow-servant in the Gospel of our Lord,

ISAAC S. DEMUND.

THE PARSONAGE, June, 1865.

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LAMENTATION

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DEATH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

“THE king lifted up his voice and wept; and all the people wept.”—2 SAM. 3 : 22.

A CIVIL war, long, fierce, bloody, that had raged between the house of Saul and the house of David, was apparently now on the eve of being brought to a speedy and happy issue. No less a person than Abner, who had strangely been a leader of Israel against him whom they all knew to have been chosen by the Lord to be the shepherd of his people, gives in his allegiance. He would gather all Israel to his lord the king. He would set up the throne of David from Dan to Beersheba. The anointed of the Lord should reign over all his heart’s desire. The king gladly accepts the overture, and at once his servant proceeds to execute his noble purpose.

In the mysterious providence of the Lord, however, Abner might not be the honored instrument of effecting the desirable result. Joab, that led the army of the king, as if about to speak quietly with him, smites him under his fifth rib that he dies. With holy horror and righteous indignation, the king exclaims : “I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord forever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house.” Shocked, disappointed, grieved, the royal mandate goes forth to Joab and all the people : “Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” In the solemn obse-

quies, the king himself takes the lead. He lifts up his voice and weeps. The sympathy that swells in his bosom spreads around like a torrent. All the people weep. One elegy after another falls from the lips of the royal mourner: "Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fallest thou." "So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down." "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness."

Was it not indeed a time to mourn? Who can wonder, as he reads or hears the simple touching narrative, that every eye should flow with tears?

Sad, nevertheless, as that scene must have been, we, as a nation, have been visited with a far greater calamity, and that calls for more bitter lamentation.

After the brief exegetical statement just made, and before we venture to consider that which is yet more afflictive, it may not be deemed improper that we should pause a moment to chasten the mingled emotions that agitate us, by lifting up our hearts with an humble hymn of adoration to Him without whom a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, much less a prince or a president:

"Wait, O my soul! thy Maker's will!
Tumultuous passions, all be still!
Nor let a murmuring thought arise;
His providence and ways are wise.

"He in the thickest darkness dwells,
Performs his work, the cause conceals;
But though his methods are unknown,
Judgment and truth support his throne.

"In heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes his firm decrees;
And by his saints it stands confessed,
That what he does is ever best.

“ Wait, then, my soul, submissive wait,
Prostrate before his awful seat ;
And 'midst the terrors of his rod,
Trust in a wise and gracious God.”

A greater calamity, it has been asserted, has fallen upon our nation, than that which caused so much sorrow to king David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, and his people—greater indisputably, whether you consider the mode of its occurrence, or the time, or the illustrious victim involved.

It is no easy matter to divest death of that which is terrible, though it may not be properly deemed calamitous. In a good degree, nevertheless, we can reconcile ourselves to it, if it may only be that which we call natural ; that which comes from the hand of God in his ordinary way.

Our nation, it is true, wept profusely when the great and good Washington died. What sorrow could well have been more exquisite than that which then wrung the heart of the people ? But after all, could he have died at a more suitable time, or in circumstances more agreeable ? It must have been a luxury to weep that one who had the honor to lead our armies and counsellors to victory, independence, and liberty, should be permitted to pass unscathed through all the dangers he encountered, and die in peace at his own sweet home, with whatever love and skill could do to allay his pain and make soft his pillow. A tried Christian, an approved patriot, a successful warrior, and an eminent statesman, he said, with almost his latest breath, as he died hard by great physical suffering—and what could have been more becomingly said ? “ It is well.”

Not thus sweetly, alas ! was it with regard to him over whom our whole nation is now summoned to pour forth its bitter tears.

His mode of death seems monstrous, without the least extenuating mitigation, because unnatural, violent, inhuman, ungodly, fiendish. Joab and Abishai were held by David the king and his people inexcusable, execrable, though they thought to have screened themselves from guilt, because Abner had killed Asahel their brother in open battle. But,

in the assassin of the President of the United States, what are you not required to behold? A desperado—acting as if a champion for liberty, and about to perform a glorious deed that would rank him with Brutus or Tell—assuming to himself the prerogative of an avenger on behalf of his country, springing upon his unsuspecting victim and dealing the mortal wound that in an instant deprives him of consciousness, and in a few hours ends his earthly being! If King David and all the people wept because of the mode of Abner's removal, how much more should our whole nation, North, South, East, and West, pour out tears like rivers of waters! That our country should have given existence to such an assassin! That a person so elevated as the President of these United States, should have been killed by a man utterly lawless, reckless, abandoned! Weep! weep! it becomes you to weep. You cannot easily exceed the bounds of propriety, though you should yield to unutterable anguish, because of such unmeasurable atrocity.

At length, too, the black cloud of war—surcharged with woe, that caused thousands to go down to their graves in blood, that desolated many pleasant homes, that multiplied widows and orphans, that made numbers childless—breaks away, as if we might soon have a clear and serene sky and a jubilant earth. Measures had been pursued with manifest advantage in the gigantic effort to save, if possible, our beloved country. Victory after victory had been achieved over the hosts confederated against the Union. We need not concern ourselves about their special plea or their motives. One thing must be obvious even to themselves, that whilst they protested their inalienable and covenanted rights had been assailed and were in danger of being destroyed, many of them, of their politicians in particular, helped to introduce into power the very administration they denounced, and made its triumph the occasion long desired to tear themselves from the national embrace. They rose in their might, and so shook the Union from its centre to its remotest bounds, that many of its friends trembled and not a few of its enemies exulted: it would be divided, if not ruptured and torn piece-

meal—a ghastly spectacle—a wide-spread desolation. That power is broken. Their most renowned General, baffled in many tremendous assaults, finds himself at last in a situation in which he must either surrender or be mercilessly slaughtered. The magnanimous Lieutenant-General of our armies first moves to spare the further effusion of blood in a cause that had become hopeless and forlorn in the extreme. More gracious terms he could not well have proposed and required. By surrender, the officers would be spared from mortifying humiliation, and the soldiers, instead of being imprisoned, would be discharged upon parole. Officers and soldiers would be permitted to return to their homes, nor should they be at all disturbed by the authority of the United States, provided they respected the Constitution and laws of the Republic.

And now the whole country is roused to intoxicating expectancy that the remnant lingering parts of the black war-cloud would, in like manner, be dissipated. The North were unmistakably for peace. And the South, though they had been the first in actual aggression, and though they had endeavored to persuade themselves they had sufficient grievances to justify the cause they had taken, found themselves the greatest sufferers, and were perhaps more solicitous still to end a war they should never have initiated. That lesson we have been so slow to learn, seems now to be well understood and received. To the ballot, and not to the bullet, they must go, who would enjoy civil and religious liberty. It is in that way alone we may rectify any evil, real or imaginary.

Now, then, it looked as if we had nothing more to do than to devise and adjust terms by which we might have a speedy settlement of affairs, and be, as once and that not long ago we had been, friends and brothers, and fellow-citizens under the same Constitution, abiding by the same ballot, and subject to the same administration. Leniency, instead of truculence, prevailed. The whole nation were reuniting to obliterate past misunderstandings and injuries, to heal the wounds that had been made, and repair, as far as possible, the immense damage that had been sustained. We were preparing for a joyous outburst of high satisfaction because of the aspect of affairs, full of promise and interest. In a moment, an assas-

sin takes away the life of our President. Another inflicts severe wounds on the Secretary of State, lying in his bed seriously ill. The cup of joy, we were about to drink, is suddenly dashed to the ground, and the cup of grief, filled to its brim, is pressed to the nation's lips. Who does not mourn? Who does not weep? Who ought not to be in bitterness and sorrow because of such a catastrophe at such a time? At any time it had been dreadful. At none more than the present could it be more so, or more deplorable.

Let our thoughts be next directed to that part of the tragedy which is far more distressing, that which more than aught else increases our affliction. The victim of the assassin was a shining mark. How could effrontery or malignity sufficient have been commanded by the evil-doer to rush into the presence of one so distinguished? In all the United States, no one was more prominent by position than President Lincoln. By free suffrage he had been called to his lofty station from among the people, and consequently, in dignity if not in person, he was head and shoulders above us all. We are wont, it may be from too great self-complacence, to account the station he occupied as the most dazzling in our world. To the chair of the President of the United States, we attach, and think we have reason to attach, more importance and solid glory than to any throne of any monarch upon the face of the globe, the throne of Queen Victoria herself not excepted. He who occupies it is there by the vote of a people independent and self-governing, to serve them according to the Constitution and laws. In our estimation, he, that is placed by us on an elevation overtopping the thrones of the earth, is the Lord's anointed. No power below, save that which put him there, may call him to an account. Except by impeachment, conducted by rules carefully provided for it, he is beyond our reach. He is the nation's head, our legitimate ruler, a power from God. In fact, the providence of God places him where he is, and says to us: "Touch not mine anointed." For him, every Christian is commanded in Scripture to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks." To that power, embodied in the Chief Magistrate, every citizen must

be subject, rendering to him the things that are Cæsar's, since he is God's minister, to whom the sword is given, that he may prove a terror to evil-doers, a praise to them that do well.

Yet, the very individual, whom God and man had made so august by office, is ferociously assailed and destroyed by an assassin. The murder of any one is awful, and demands nothing short of death. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Regicide is exceedingly flagrant. What, then, is that crime which, by unrighteous violence, by assassination, takes from off the summit of earthly greatness, and hurries into a bloody and premature grave, the President of a free people? Just a mere glance at such a crimson—scarlet—sin against the most illustrious occupant of the presidential chair, against the sovereignty of the nation, against the majesty of the Most High, and we instinctively shudder, intensely grieve. No man, whatever may have been his predilections, with due regard for the deference challenged by the greatest dignitary on earth, can be otherwise than overcome with deep perplexity, horror, and grief. For, what if, as a free people, we have our preferences, and may fearlessly and manfully express them by free speech, a free press, and a free ballot? The more on that account, it behooves us to be a people, without one solitary exception, sensitive as it regards the life, health, character, and prosperity of him we have, of our own accord, in our own elected, constitutional way, exalted to be the chief of the nation. Hear it: let every freeman hear it; let every one feel and say it: "We hold in utter, unspeakable abhorrence, the assassination of the President, and we mourn by reason of it, as they who refuse to be comforted."

It will probably be admitted, the main particular, demanding and warranting sincere, Christian, patriotic grief, has been selected. Without infringing on the propriety or sacredness of the pulpit—the last of all places for political harangue or fulsome eulogy—it may be further adduced that as the exalted person, because of whose death we mourn this holy day in the house of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was made such by his station, so, in many if not in all respects, he honored that station:

Whether or not he was the greatest and best incumbent of our presidential chair, I leave to others to say or think just as they please. With those who can only speak of him with anger and aspersion, let there be no sympathy. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, complains of those in his day who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." The word of God is explicit on the point: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." It says to us: "Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." The evil-speaking, the wholesale slander, the unqualified denunciation, the calling of hard names pro and con., the venom of party-spirit, contributed much, undoubtedly, toward bringing upon us the righteous judgment of God in one of the most harrowing forms.

Our late President, whatever may have been his peculiar views on a subject that has long agitated, distressed, and endangered our land, or whatever may have been the line of policy he felt obligated to adopt and pursue, as being bound by solemn oath to support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States, was for the Union, the whole Union, and nothing but the Union. As he took the chair, he lifted up his voice and declared he had no right, nor did he mean to interfere with that institution which had become peculiar to the South. Singular as it may now be regarded, the war, nevertheless, came on.

Again, like another President Jackson, he lifted up his voice, "The Union must and shall be preserved;" adding, what gives special lustre to the determination, "either with or without slavery." In this respect he stood preëminent, peerless. He rises above all those miserable *ultraisms*, those disorganizing principles and platforms, that almost everywhere throughout our borders, especially during presidential campaigns, exerted no insignificant influence to precipitate upon us the terrible scourge of civil war. What a towering, sublime, position was that of our President! Was he not, did he not then demonstrate that he was, an unconditional Union man? He was for his country, his whole country, and nothing but his country. Had he then been responded to, how soon would

the cannon have ceased to roar, belching forth destruction and death, or only roared in the triumph of good will and peace ! • The policy subsequently taken, was, to many good citizens, more questionable. Still, they admired his course in giving fair warning to those who had seceded, that if, within a prescribed time, they did not lay down their arms and submit to what the Constitution and laws required, he would, by proclamation, emancipate their slaves. He was as good as his word. And though many thought a different process had sooner ended the war and been better for us, they knew the ruling passion of the President was to save the whole country. Sufficient, amply sufficient, too, is that one trait, ever looming up before us amid surrounding darkness and raging billows, to induce and impel every one to hold and exult : He honored his station : He did the best he knew to do. If he erred —it is human to err, the greatest and best are not infallible— he erred, if at all, in conscientiously endeavoring to save our endangered country. That conspicuous civic virtue alone, his conscientious effort to save the nation's life, to secure a continued national integrity, apart from the position he occupied, as well as apart from aught else admirable or censurable, ought to embalm him in our hearts, and constrain us to bewail his untimely end.

We would also allude to a few other properties that characterized and adorned the departed. In social life, he is said and conceded to have been a most agreeable companion ; somewhat unpolished, perhaps, to fastidious etiquette and fashion, but, for that very exception, the more genial by reason of his sterling sense, humane heart, and playful humor. It is not surprising that they, who were favored to be his personal friends, and enjoyed his confidence, are inconsolable.

What must he not also have been in his family ? We can almost hear the throbbing hearts and irrepressible sobs of his widow and children. We weep, we cannot but weep, with them. Her husband, their father, was the constitutional, honored President of these United States. Yet he is suddenly snatched from their warm and fond embrace by the red hand of the assassin, just as he was about to reap the fruit of all his toil—the salvation of our country, and its rescue “ from the

hand of strange children ; whose mouth speaketh vanity ; and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.”

He was a man, too, who habitually frequented the house of God, where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are worshipped—the only sacrifice made for sin, and the absolute need of renovating grace, plainly and openly avowed. He would seem to have been actuated by principle, predilection—not policy, not applause.

Let, then, an unimpassioned survey, be taken of the man he was, by position and rare adaptation and can one that takes it be found among ourselves or anywhere in our land, who does not sincerely and profoundly grieve over the melancholy end of such a personage as ABRAHAM LINCOLN?

What the dark providence justly and peremptorily claims is anticipated and rendered.

The whole nation rises to mourn and weep ! Our gallant and victorious officers, soldiers, and sailors, mourn and weep !

Our statesmen, our senators and representatives, our governors and legislators in the different States, our mayors and counsellors, our judges and advocates, our merchants and mechanics, our capitalists and laborers, mourn and weep !

Our flags, over the land and over the waters, the forts and the arsenals, droop, draped in sable emblems !

The hum of business is hushed. Our cities, towns, and villages, our rural districts though in the buoyant season of spring, mourn and weep !

Churches of all denominations, synagogues, colleges, academies, mourn and weep ! The church-going bell—where is not its funeral knell, its doleful lament, to be heard ?

Private residences and inclosures, thousands of corporations, ten thousands of individuals, forgetful of political antagonism, indicate the nation’s grief by some one or other sorrowful token !

Theatres close their doors. Accustomed as their actors are to the imitation of human passions, so as almost to make it like awful reality, they have not the heart just now to play. They, too, must mourn and weep !

Ambassadors from foreign courts express their horror at the atrocious crime, and tender us their condolence !

All civilized nations, all who have regard for constitutional law, all who are interested in the self-government of a free people, upon hearing the sad tidings, will mourn with us and for us, that we should have had meted out to us such a fearful disaster!

Yet, the nation lives. Hope yet lights up our darkened horizon. Our God controls all. The government of heaven and earth could not be on better shoulders than where it has been placed by our Father who is in heaven. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is upon the throne. He lives. He reigns “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” He can so overrule what he has seen fit to permit, as to hasten that which we impatiently desire—the return of peace—peace upon sound principles, peace upon the basis of constitutional liberty—such a peace, such a condition, such a national aggrandizement, that no State shall clash with another, that none shall rise up against the general government—which, in its turn, will scrupulously respect the limits by which it was carefully circumscribed when called into existence; that there shall be hereafter no North, no South, no East, no West, no sectional jealousy, no partisan animosity and strife, no provocation under any pretext, no libellous attack on constitutional law and order, no opposition, no violence against them, no rebellion, no war.

By that Christianity, of which our exalted Lord and Saviour is the author and the finisher, a higher patriotism than the world has yet seen shall everywhere flourish. Our millions shall dwell together—every man beneath his own vine and fig-tree, worshipping his God according to the dictates of his own conscience, there being none, no tyrant-priest, no tyrant-prince, no tyrant-man, to disturb him or make him afraid—occupying, improving, enjoying, and honoring the most splendid inheritance ever vouchsafed to any nation beneath the heavens.

God save our country! God save the President of the United States!



